



Newsletter



Volume 10, Issue 9

Carvers Creek State Park

September 1, 2022

2022 Year of the Tree:

Bald Cypress or Pond Cypress (Taxodium distichum varieties)

Can you help us solve the mystery of the Carvers Creek Cypress trees?

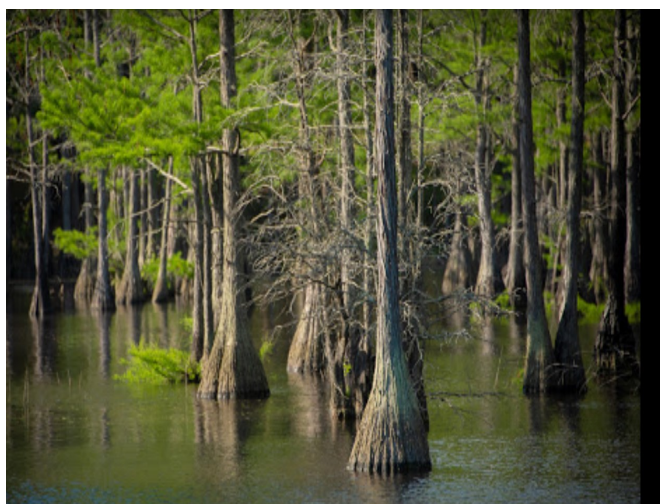
Cypress trees are a type of tree known as a **deciduous conifers**. They share characteristics of both **deciduous** and **coniferous** trees. The cypress trees at Carvers creek have needle-like leaves, which they drop every autumn. They also have small, round cones that bear seeds.

Deciduous tree: a tree that sheds its leaves every year, usually in the fall.

Coniferous tree: a tree that has cones with seeds and typically has needle-like leaves

Deciduous Conifer: a tree that forms cones and needles, but they also change colors in the fall and lose their needles every year.

Some trees in the cypress family are pretty easy to identify, like the eastern red cedar. But there are two types of cypress tree that are native to the southeast and especially tricky to tell apart. They are the **bald cypress** and the **pond cypress**. Some people think that we have bald cypress at the park, and other people say they are pond cypress trees. **Maybe you can help us figure out which one we have. Maybe it's both!**



The first step to figure out which type of cypress tree we have here is to visit the park! Take a short half-mile hike down the Rockefeller Loop trail to the millpond and start looking at some of the cypress trees around the edge of the pond. You can tell the cypress tree by its scaly brown or gray bark that naturally peels off into long strips, and the distinctive cone shaped base (see the picture above). Once you have found some cypress trees, your next step is to examine the leaves and branches. **Try not to break any!**

The two types of cypress tree have slightly different leaves, and that's your best way to tell them apart.

The bald cypress has flat needles and they grow in the same plane. What does that mean? Imagine taking a small green twig of bald cypress and putting it on a sheet of a paper. Growing in the same plane means all the needles would

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touch the paper at the same time. The pond cypress leaves are more needle shaped (like the shaft of an awl or a screwdriver), in a spiral arrangement that stays close to the stem.



Bald Cypress



Pond Cypress

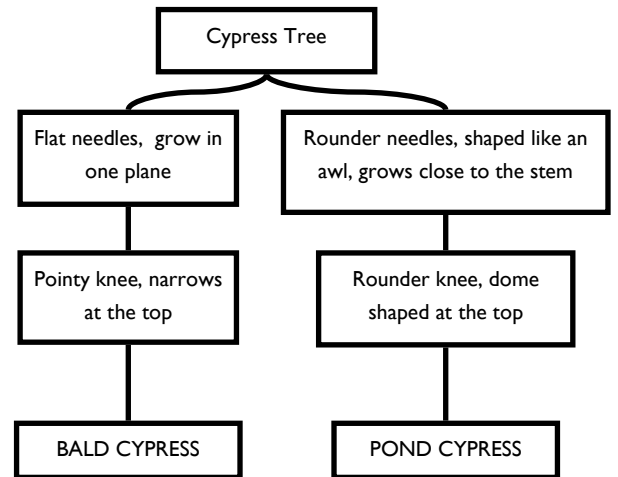
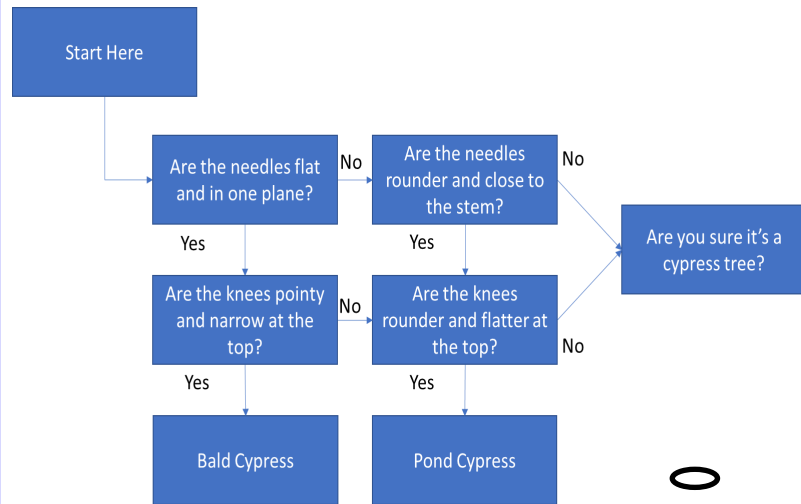
After you have examined the cypress leaves, you can take a look at a peculiar feature of the cypress tree called the “**knees**”. Cypress knees are a part of the cypress tree root system, and you can often find them growing a few feet away from the trunk of the tree, in water or on land. The tree may use them to help it breathe properly in the wet en-



Cypress Knees

vironment it likes to grow in, or for other functions like storing food for the tree, or providing additional support for the tree as it gets older. Although it can be hard to tell them apart, they can help you solve the mystery of the cypress trees! Bald cypress trees (remember, they have flatter needles on their branches) have an almost pointy knee. Pond cypress trees have rounder, flatter knee tops.

That’s a lot of stuff to remember! To make things easier, Rangers use a helpful tool called a **dichotomous key** to help them identify plants and animals. You can make one for cypress trees! It might look like this one of these:



A **dichotomous key** is a tool to help identify different plants and animals by a simple yes or no test of observable characteristics.

Did you figure it out? Stop by the office and let us know to win a prize!

If you would like to attend one of our upcoming programs please call 910-436-4681 to reserve your spots.

Community Outreach

The following program are sponsored by Carvers Creek State Park. *They will not be held at the park but rather, in different places within the community.*

Saturday, Sept. 3rd @ 10:00 am

Caterpillar Crawl at **Smith Lake Recreation Area**

CACR Walking Group

Friday, Sept. 2nd, 9th, and 16th from 8:30am to 9:30am

Get some exercise while enjoying fresh air and spend a morning in the park, when you join us for a 1-3 mile walk on park trails. Go at your own pace or stay with the group. All ages and abilities welcome (parents/guardians must accompany children under 15). Meet outside the Welcome Center. Bug spray, water and boots, walking or running shoes recommended. No registration required.

Sunset Paddle

Saturday, Sept. 10th @ 6:30pm

Take and canoe through the cypress trees and experience the Mill Pond in a whole new light, while enjoying the sunset. See parts of the park that most people don't get to and hone your canoeing skills. Experienced and beginners are welcome to join on this evening of adventure. **Call to register in advance. Space is limited. Age limit is 8 years old and older**

Journaling from Scratch

Saturday, Sept. 17th @ 10:00 am

Come to the park to learn and practice paper making! The Park Superintendent will lead a class on how to make paper and everyone will have the opportunity to make their own. After we finish, we will use homemade paper to make nature journals and go on an easy nature hike to explore the park and practice journaling. This class is suitable for all ages and families are welcome! Please call the park at (910) 436-4681 to reserve your space. This class is limited to 10 people. Due to the nature of the activity, this class may be rescheduled if there is inclement weather.

Who Lives in a Tree?

Monday, Sept. 5th @ 10am

Not only is the forest home to many plants and animals, but the trees specifically have residents! Come learn about the special animals that live in our trees. We'll also have a craft and activities for all ages. **We will be meeting at the secret pond. Call 910-436-4681 to register.**

Snakes

Sunday, Sept. 11th @ 6:00pm

Feelings of fear and fascination collide as we learn all about snakes. Take this opportunity to learn all about snakes, how to identify them, where you can find them, and even get the chance to meet and touch a REAL snake!
Call 910-436-4681 to register.

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Caterpillar Crawl at **Smith Lake Recreation Area**

Canoe Hike

Saturday, Sept. 18th @ 5:00pm

We will be learning the basics of canoeing and then trying out our new skills by maneuvering through the Cypress swamp. This is great for beginners or those wanting a closer look at the Cypress trees. **Call in advance to register. Limited spots Please allow approximately 15 minutes to walk from the parking lot to the Rain Shelter. Age limit is 8 years old and older.**

Autumn Night Hike

Friday, Sept. 23rd @ 7:00pm

Join a Park Ranger for an evening hike in the autumn air at Long Valley Farm. The hike will start at 7pm. Listen for the night sounds of our animal friends as we explore the park trails. Bug spray, water and comfortable walking shoes recommended.

Volunteer Day

Sunday, Sept. 25th from 9:00am-11:00am

Carvers Creek State Park offers a wide variety of opportunities when you come to our Volunteer Days. Our prized volunteers help us with everything from our old farm fences, to culverts, to invasive species of plants, to leaf clean-up, trail creation, and many others. We will be meeting at the **Long Valley Access located in Spring Lake, NC 28390.**

Nocturnal Animals

Saturday, Oct. 1st @ 7:00pm

Take an evening stroll with a park ranger and learn more about the nocturnal life in the woods around us. You will get to explore the Long Leaf Pine and wetland communities found here at the park.

Please call to register

Owl Prowl

Sunday, Oct. 2nd @ 7:30pm

Participants will be learning about owl adaptations, what they sound like, as well as looking for our own owls to identify! We ask participants bring their own flashlight.